

FINISHED TRANSCRIPT

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AN OVERVIEW FOR LIBRARIES
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All participants will be muted throughout the call, and for
the questions and answers portion at the end, please type in
your questions using the chat box. And I should add that we do
not have any information on or knowledge of Justin Bieber's
status at this time. Thank you.

Now I'll turn it over to our partners at the USCIS for the presentation.

>> HOLLY TAGHAVI: Again, good afternoon to all of you, and thank you so much for joining today's webinar. My name is Holly, and I work with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Public Engagement Division, and I am joined today with other colleagues from USCIS, and we would like to give you some information today to assist you with information about USCIS in general, about the USCIS and IMLS partnership, and to also give you some tips and information that will assist you when your patrons come to a library seeking information about immigration benefits.

Before I begin, I just wanted to give you a general note, which is that this presentation does not have the force of law or of a DHS directive and is not meant for attribution, and we will not be discussing any specific cases, and so if you could make sure to not discuss any information which would reveal anyone's personal identifiable information, we will be doing the presentation first followed by a question-and-answer session, and we will go through the housekeeping rules for the Q&A session a bit later.

So to get things started, we wanted to give you some information with an overview of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services agency. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services is a government agency that oversees lawful immigration to the United States. And USCIS has various strategic goals, such as strengthening the security and integrity of the immigration system. We provide effective customer-oriented immigration benefit and information services. We assist with supporting immigrants with integration and participation in civic culture. We promote flexible and sound immigration policies and programs. We support the strengthening of the infrastructure of the USCIS mission, and we operate as a high-performance organization that promotes a highly talented workforce in a dynamic work culture.

To provide you an overview of what USCIS does every single day, we wanted to give you some basic information, such as the number of offices that we have throughout the United States, which is 84 offices. We provide services to millions and millions of people, and so to give you some more specific information on an average day, we grant about 2400 permanent residence to individuals. We also issue about 6100 Permanent Resident Cards, also better known as green cards.

We welcome about 3200 new naturalized citizens. We serve about 9500 customers at each of our 84 local offices. We adjudicate or complete 23,000 applications for a variety of

immigration benefits, and we also ensure the employment eligibility of more than 58,000 new hires in the United States.

The community relations program that USCIS has put into place is meant to build a collaborative relationship with local stakeholders in a variety of manners. The community relations officers, which are located throughout the nation in 26 locations, do so by having regular meetings with our stakeholders. They facilitate and organize specific sessions with specific information and targeted agendas regarding immigration benefits. They provide educational presentations. They also email -- disseminate via email a variety of communication and publication materials that USCIS has created, and they also answer questions and inquiries that arise via phone conversations.

To get more information about the USCIS community relations program and to find the USCIS office that's closest to you, I would recommend that you visit the USCIS website, which is at www.uscis.gov and click on the tab "Find a USCIS Office."

And I am going to turn the presentation over to my colleague to continue.

>> ELIZABETH O'BRIEN: Hello, everybody. My name is Elizabeth O'Brien, and I am a Program Manager with the USCIS Office of Citizenship. A few weeks ago I was in Philadelphia at the American Library Association Midwinter Meeting. I think or hope I met some of you while I was there and encouraged you to sign into this webinar, so thank you for doing so.

USCIS and IMLS have partnered, and many of you came up to me at the ALA and asked me why are you here? And we really want to reach out to librarians, and we view you as trusted resources in the community for immigrant communities, and maybe the first stop for many of them as they seek information and knowledge. So libraries offer so much, welcoming spaces, convenient locations, public Internet access, which, you know, many new immigrants do not have. And we view librarians as potential or already existing guides for information on immigration, and that's really the point of this partnership and this series of webinars.

In June 2013, USCIS and IMLS signed a formal partnership, and the idea behind the partnership is so USCIS, with IMLS's assistance, can provide assistance to librarians and support them to support their immigrant patrons.

So the formal objective of this partnership is to support libraries through public information and engagement opportunities as well as the distribution of educational materials and training resources on immigration and citizenship. Our goals of this partnership are to provide tailored training opportunities for librarians, such as this; dedicated

information on the Citizenship Resource Center -- and I will cover that later, but we have created an online library page specifically to meet the needs of librarians -- to promote joint events at local libraries, such as naturalization information sessions, naturalization ceremonies; as well as the dissemination of public education materials. You will see we have a variety of materials. Many of you who stopped by our booth at the ALA saw our flash cards and the hundred questions. We have a wealth of information that we'd like to get out to libraries.

So under this partnership, again, I'll repeat myself because I covered a lot of this in the previous slide, we'd like to provide library personnel with information on USCIS processes and our educational resources. We want to distribute our immigration and citizenship materials. We want to partner with you to combat the unauthorized practice of immigration law. You know, a key component of this partnership is that you, the librarians, are serving as navigators and guides for your immigrant patrons. You are not advising them, which really is an important point to stress.

Highlight and share promising citizenship education practices that can be replicated. We hope to discuss this further in future webinars. We have a space for it on the Citizenship Resource Center, and we'd love to hear from you about what your successes are.

Hold citizenship information sessions and naturalization ceremonies in local libraries. And support outreach efforts related to USCIS's transition from a paper-based model to a secure, online environment and the E-Verify program.

We have had a very successful partnerships with the City of Los Angeles. We, USCIS, has provided the city's 73 public libraries with citizenship resources and training for their library personnel. We've trained the library personnel on the naturalization process and again on our resources. We have designated spaces in each library as a citizenship corner, which contains citizenship materials and resources. These citizenship corners can be replicated. We have the information on the Citizenship Resource Center, and it is one of the goals of the project to replicate them in other public libraries throughout the country.

We offer a list of nonprofit groups providing naturalization assistance in the local library and providing access to the library community rooms for citizenship and English language classes.

USCIS, through a grant program, funds many community-based organizations to provide citizenship education. We would love

for libraries to collaborate with some of these organizations and provide space for classrooms and studying.

So here's a picture of a citizenship corner. And so in the City of Los Angeles, we've established citizenship corners in each of the 73 branches. We've distributed 144,800 publications. We've trained more than 100 Los Angeles public librarians on the naturalization process and on the use of the USCIS citizenship preparation materials and resources. And we've held a variety of citizenship-related programming, including classes and information sessions, for more than 2700 participants at Los Angeles public library locations.

Back in July 2013, we've recently engaged in a similar agreement with the City of Chicago, and we have similar goals and objectives. We'd like to provide the city's 79 public libraries with citizenship resources and training for library personnel. Again, we are going to include training, trying to designate a space in each library as a citizenship corner, and also partner with nonprofits -- local nonprofit groups to offer naturalization assistance and English language and citizenship education.

So far with the City of Chicago, we've accomplished the distribution of one copy of the USCIS Civics and Citizenship Toolkit to all 79 library branches. This is one of our premiere educational materials. It is a toolkit containing a variety of our resources. Any of you who were at the ALA, I gave away a number of them and also showed them on display, and every library can order one free of charge for your collection.

We established citizenship corners in 12 Chicago public libraries and citizenship hubs in 17 locations. The citizenship hubs are more than corners. They're libraries that have a citizenship corner with our materials, but they also offer extended services, such as citizenship education or other outreach to immigrants. And also we've trained more than 50 Chicago public librarians on the naturalization process and USCIS citizenship preparation materials and resources.

>> Thank you so much, Elizabeth, and I will continue with the next section of our webinar. What we wanted to do was to go over with you some of the more common questions that you might hear in your libraries, and then we will go through to provide you with some information on resources that we have available through our USCIS website so that you may be able to guide your patrons and where they can find the answers to some of these questions.

Some of the more common questions you may have already heard are where can I find immigration forms? How can I check the status of the case that I've already filed? Where could I find English and/or citizenship classes? How do I apply for a

green card? How do I apply to become a United States citizen? What study tools are available for the naturalization test? And how may I find legal assistance as I go through the immigration process?

So we wanted to go over with you some of the tools that we have available on uscis.gov. The website provides a plethora of different resources and information that you can share with your patrons. There's a case status tracker. There's an appointment scheduler, which is referred to as InfoPass. And there are downloadable forms which all USCIS forms are absolutely free. There's information on filing tips for a variety of different application types. There are "how do I" guides, which are a variety of customer guides that USCIS has available for all the different benefits that USCIS grants. We have information on our toll-free customer service line, and we have a wide variety of educational materials available as well. So to begin with the immigration forms, as I mentioned before, all forms are absolutely free, and they may be downloaded through the USCIS website. The specific link for that page is www.uscis.gov/forms, and the forms can actually be completed online using Adobe, and you may also refer your patrons to request forms through free online -- they may call this number to receive the forms free through the mail, which the number will appear on your screen.

And again, please make sure to remind them that there is no payment ever required for copies of the forms.

So where may they go to to check on the case status of an application that they have filed with USCIS? If an immigrant has filed an application with USCIS and it's pending, in order to find out the status of their case, I would refer them to the website that is on your page. I don't want to read the whole thing to you, but you can see that on your screen. And below that, we also wanted to provide you with a screenshot so that they can see what particular part of the process their application is currently at.

How do I apply for a green card, which is also referred to as a permanent resident, a legal permanent resident? Individuals may qualify for a green card through a variety of methods, manners. They may qualify through a relationship with a family member. They may qualify through an employment or a job offer. They may qualify as someone who has entered the United States as a refugee or has applied for asylum status in the United States or a number of other special provisions.

To get more information about permanent residency, how to qualify and apply, I would refer them to www.uscis.gov/greencard.

And we also wanted to go through information about applying for U.S. citizenship, and I will pass it over to Elizabeth for more details. But to apply for U.S. citizenship, individuals will need to file a form referred to as Form N-400, which is the Application for Naturalization. They must meet all eligibility requirements for this benefit, and the information on the application process can be found at www.uscis.gov/citizenship/learners/apply-citizenship. And I will pass it over to Elizabeth to provide us with more information on that resource.

>> ELIZABETH O'BRIEN: Hi, everybody. We have the Citizenship Resource Center, www.uscis.gov/citizenship, and on there, there are a variety of tabs which I would encourage you to become familiar with if you are interested in this topic. We have specific tabs for learners, teachers, organizations, and under the organization tab is actually where you have your library page.

But under the learners tab, there's "study for the test," and on study for the test, you can find materials to study for the English portion of the test, you can find study materials for the civics portion of the test. And on this -- these resources are much more than some of our printed materials. We have interactive practice exercises, audio, video. You can download copies of the flash cards. There's a variety of resources that I think meet a variety of English skill levels and learning styles. So I would encourage you to check out this page and look at the variety.

And we'll also go through this more in depth in the next webinar.

Now, where can I find English and/or citizenship classes? This page is also under the learners tab under "find help in your community." On this page, if you scroll down, we have a list of USCIS grant-funded programs by state. So these are CBOs that have applied for our grant program to provide citizenship education services and also legal services.

Also, on this page, we have America's Literacy Directory for English and/or citizenship education. You can type in your location with a zip code and find classes in your community. Both of these resources I think should be utilized, and they're really good at finding help in your community, just as the tab says.

When we entered into this agreement with IMLS, we decided to add a page to the Citizenship Resource Center just for libraries. This is an informational page, and it includes helpful resources, information about our webinar series, many of you may have found information for today's webinar on that page, contact details for local USCIS offices, and also for the

Community Relations Officers, which many of you who spoke to me about at the ALA, you know, wanted a way to contact your local Community Relations Officer, and much more. So this page is available on the Citizenship Resource Center, you go under the organizations tab backslash libraries.

>> Great. Thank you so much, Elizabeth.

So we are going to move on to a couple more key details about applying for immigration benefits which relate to finding assistance with actually applying for benefits.

So individuals, of course, can always file USCIS forms on their own; however, sometimes there's, you know, various case issues or various questions that individuals may have that might need a little bit more assistance, and so some resources that individuals can use to get legal assistance are available. However, I would caution individuals about the fact that unfortunately, there are individuals who are not authorized to provide such information, and we don't want them to get scammed. And USCIS does have a page which contains a variety of information on how to find legal assistance and some, you know, tips and pointers to help avoid being scammed on uscis.gov/avoidscams. So please note that only attorneys and accredited representatives are able to provide specific legal advice about which forms to submit. They are able to explain various immigration options that an individual might have. And they are also provided with the ability to communicate with USCIS about a specific case. So if the individual does not have the money to hire a lawyer, what could they do? There are also individuals that are approved through the board of immigration appeals, and they have a listing of individuals who provide services for either free or for little cost, and for more information on that, there is a link at the bottom to find legal services.

We also wanted to follow up with you on items and things that you can do to become more involved with USCIS. There's many ways that your libraries can become more involved. Some of them are listed on the screen, such as visiting the USCIS Citizenship Resource Center's library page, and under the organizations tab, you can find a variety of organizations there.

There's an ability to subscribe to the IMLS newsletter, and that information is provided on the screen as well.

You may visit the USCIS-IMLS partnership page, again, listed on your screen. You may register for USCIS free email alerts through the USCIS webpage at uscis.gov/citizenship, and click on "Email Updates." Many of you may have received an invitation to join today's webinar by having signed up for those alerts.

I would also recommend that you contact your local USCIS Community Relations Officer for further information and guidance, and again, as Elizabeth mentioned earlier, for information on finding your local USCIS Community Relations Officer, we would refer you to the library page that is on the Citizenship Resource Center.

We will also be holding another webinar in a series which will occur on March the 6th, and there will be more information coming out about the specifics about how to join and the time and the topics that will be covered.

And so we also wanted to let you know that USCIS has developed a library-specific subscriber topic which is entitled "Updates from USCIS-IMLS," which you'll find under the sign-up page, which is referred to under the outreach heading.

So I think that covers it for the information that we wanted to give you. We would love to hear from you on the questions, comments that you may have for us. And the best way to do that would be to go to your chat feature on your screen and type out the questions that you have, and what we'll do is we'll go through and read your questions and respond to your inquiries at this time. We'd love to hear from you.

>> ELIZABETH O'BRIEN: Hi. This is Elizabeth. Our first question is does USCIS accredit organizations to provide immigration services?

USCIS does not accredit them, meaning, I guess, give them the credentials or the validation to do so. That happens through the Board of Immigration Appeals. However, the Office of Citizenship does have a grant program that can fund accredited organizations to provide immigration services. Information on the grant program can be found on the Citizenship Resource Center.

>> Okay. Thank you so much, Elizabeth. So the next question we have is can librarians help patrons with their citizenship application?

So the short answer to that would be no. What we don't want you to feel like what you need to do is to actually get involved with assisting someone in determining whether they're qualified for a benefit and to go square by square and help them with filling out any applications.

What we would prefer for you to do is to, rather, lead them to the USCIS website to find out more information about the benefit that they are applying for, to find out if they are qualified, and then also each application type has a very detailed instruction sheet that is also available online. And so you may use that information to guide your patrons too so that they can find that information.

You may also guide them to work with accredited organizations that Elizabeth referred to earlier, community-based organizations that are available that may help them with that specific task of filling out an application, or an attorney may also do so as well.

>> ELIZABETH O'BRIEN: Hi. This is Elizabeth. We have another question that says I am the branch manager of a small branch but part of a larger system. If I wanted to create a citizenship corner, can I do it on my branch's behalf, or does it have to be through the library system I'm a part of?

I think that's really an internal question for your library. We wouldn't have any restriction with you trying to create one on behalf of your branch. Or if the larger system that you are a part of wanted to do it system wide. So I really think that's a question for you to discuss within your system.

>> Thank you so much for your questions. So another question that we had come in was how can we hold a naturalization ceremony at my library?

The answer to that question would be to contact the Community Relations Officer that oversees your region, and again, for information on who your Community Relations Officer would be and how to contact them, we would have you go to the Citizenship Resource Center and click on the Librarians page and then on there will be the resources on who your Community Relations Officer is and how to contact them.

>> Hi. We have a question here. I get many patrons seeking a list of questions for the citizenship exam, which apparently is updated every year. Is there a link to access this list easily?

Well, that is a bit of misinformation. The questions are not updated every year. It is a possible 100 questions that can be asked during a citizenship exam. The immigration officer would ask a maximum of 10.

On the Citizenship Resource Center, we have all the hundred questions listed on there. We have self-tests that someone can go on. So again, the real answer to this question is you should direct your patron to www.uscis.gov/citizenship, the Citizenship Resource Center, and that's where you will find many forms of the citizenship question.

All right. And so our next question on the list is the Hartford Public Library recently became the nation's first to be certified by the Bureau of Immigration Appeals. What does that entail? We wanted to thank you for this question. What we also wanted to do was let you know that this process was a little more involved than we can get to on this webinar; however, we wanted to provide you with a response to that question. So what we would ask to you do is if you could please send an email to

our public engagement mailbox so that we can provide you with more detailed information about the Board of Immigration Appeals process and we can connect you with them so that they may accurately provide you with more details. And our public engagement mailbox is public.engagement@uscis.dhs.gov.

And so also really quick, I wanted to cover another question that had come up a bit earlier, which was will there be speakers made available to come to the libraries? And again, this was something that came up earlier with respect to your Community Relations Officers. You know, my recommendation to you would be to seek out their contact information to send them a message and then to communicate with them to let them know your location, the number of individuals that you have, and to try to coordinate with them to see if they are available to come to your location.

>> We have a question here, can you give an example of naturalization ceremonies in libraries?

We hold naturalization ceremonies in libraries fairly frequently. It really entails use of, like, a public common room and providing a place for applicants to check in. These ceremonies are usually relatively small, less than 50 applicants. A USCIS, the immigration officers come with all the naturalization materials, and they do the actual swearing-in. These are public events usually. They take about an hour. Really, the main thing or the main piece from the libraries that we are looking for is use of their public space.

Okay. Thank you so much. So our next question is does USCIS provide foreign language options on their website?

So USCIS does provide a variety of materials and documents that are available on our website in a variety of options, not for every document; however, many of our documents come in a variety of languages. There's about 13 languages in addition to the English language that our materials do come in. And a website that I wanted to provide you that has the Welcome to the U.S. guides and other public education materials in different languages, which is www.uscis.gov/multilingual.

>> Hi. This is Bob from the IMLS, and I am going to address the question about will funding be made available to libraries for these services.

I would mention a couple of things. My colleagues at the USCIS identified a whole range of options that libraries could consider, but those are up to the libraries individually to determine what they would like to do. So there's no obligation from either the perspective of the IMLS or the USCIS to do any of these things.

We thought at a minimum that patrons will be coming into libraries with immigration-related questions, and we wanted to

be able to tell librarians that these resources were available so that you will be able to direct anyone with these questions towards resources that can help with them. But we don't foresee that this becomes in any way a burden, and we don't see that we are requesting librarians to take on additional services beyond what they consider their mission. So again, this is just material that we are making available to help librarians with what we consider to be routine issues and to make them aware of any possibilities that would be of value to their patrons and within their mission.

So the answer is no, we don't foresee any additional funding. There's always the opportunity to apply to IMLS grant programs for project-related funding that could involve working with immigrant groups or working with these resources, and I'd be happy to talk to anyone offline about those possibilities.

Thank you.

>> There's a question here on the citizenship corners. Is there a formal procedure to creating a citizenship corner? The answer to that is no. What materials were used to populate the materials in LA and Chicago, and can they be ordered in bulk if we want to start a corner?

We are going to go over citizenship corners in more depth in our next webinar. I do have a colleague on the line who could maybe address this. Norine, are you available?

>> Hi, Elizabeth. I am so sorry about that. Can you just repeat that question?

>> ELIZABETH O'BRIEN: Sure. It's about what materials were used to create those citizenship corners in LA, and I know it's a long list, but if you could give maybe some of the main items that were used, and people are asking is there a formal procedure, and I don't think it's formal, but any guidance you could give.

>> Sure. With the Los Angeles Public Library, we started off with about 26 different materials from USCIS, and that includes promotional posters, flyers, brochures, as well as our popular citizenship preparation study materials, including flash cards and book lists to help somebody who is applying for citizenship prepare for their naturalization test.

So what we have found is the publications have been of great value and have been very popular at the Los Angeles Public Library as well as our takeaway materials. So it's a learning experience for us. Since that initial distribution, we have also added on other informational brochures surrounding the practice of immigration law, and that has been very popular in LA.

>> Thank you so much, Norine.

>> Sure.

>> Okay. So our next question is what is the age that Spanish speakers can take the test in Spanish?

So this question is referring to the requirement for the naturalization application, and to let you know our next webinar, which is, again, taking place on March 6, we are going to go through more details about the process and application for -- both for applying for a green card as well as applying for naturalization, so we'll be going through more details at that time.

To give you a quick answer on that, in general, with respect to the waivers required to be able to take the test in your own language, it is usually the individual needs to be 55 years of age or older and needs to have had their green card for 15 years or longer. Or they may be 50 years of age or older and have had their green card for more than 20 years. Again, this is just very general information that I am giving you. Again, we'll go over some more specifics on the next webinar on March 6.

>> The next question we have is may I have an example of nonprofit organizations that have been involved with this initiative?

Well, this particular initiative that we're discussing today is about a partnership with -- between USCIS and IMLS and libraries.

I had referenced earlier the USCIS Office of Citizenship, the grant program, and if you are interested to see who had been funded under that program, you can go to the Citizenship Resource Center under Organizations, and there is a list by state of organizations we have funded.

And for example, a variety of organizations that are in communities across the country, such as Catholic Charities, and the International Rescue Committee. We've also funded libraries. We've funded the Hartford Public Library to provide citizenship education. So it is a wide variety of organizations across the country.

We have another question. Our library would like to add our English as a second language classes to your website. How can we do that?

Again, if you go to the Citizenship Resource Center, there's a link there for America's Literacy Directory, and if you open that link, you can add your class onto there.

>> This is Bob Horton again. I am answering the question, do we know if there have been any articles published in professional journals discussing libraries' experiences collaborating with USCIS or housing citizenship corners?

And at this point, I'd have to say we don't know of any, but we'd certainly look forward to finding them. And if we do,

we will share those through a variety of different communication media.

>> Okay. So the next question that we have, I'll read it first, is in my library, many patrons are not comfortable with Internet use to gather relevant info. They need help with USCIS services and wish to obtain these services in person. Is it okay to utilize the InfoPass service to get them an appointment in the door, so to speak?

So for the InfoPass option, basically, InfoPass is for individuals who have already applied for a benefit and have a pending case with USCIS, so they create an appointment via InfoPass so that they may go in and speak to an immigration officer regarding their case.

They may also utilize the USCIS customer service line to ask any questions that they have regarding a case that's pending as well. The InfoPass is not for individuals to make an appointment for general questions that do not have to do with a pending application, however.

>> We have a question here, when will you be holding the webinar specifically on creating citizenship corners?

We will include that topic in our next webinar on March 6. At the will include other topics, but we definitely will cover citizenship corners on March 6.

Hi. We have a question here, is there a way to search for the nearest citizenship hub as opposed to citizenship corner, and that's a good question, but we don't have them cataloged in a way that you could publicly search for them.

If you are in Chicago, as I mentioned earlier, has 17 of these citizenship hubs. You could contact your local library system and ask them what kind of materials they have and what services they offer on citizenship education.

Hi, everyone. We have another question, which was where can I find a copy of this presentation? And our webinar facilitator is typing that information into the chat box for everyone to view, and we'll be providing you the link for that - for this webinar.

>> So we think we've covered all the questions that have been added to the chat box. We'll wait another minute. If anyone has any more questions. Otherwise, we'll plan to close out in the next minute or so. So if you do have any last-minute questions, please type them in and we'll respond.

We have another question. Is there a list of the free citizenship materials that are available and in what languages?

Again, and I think I sound like a broken record, I keep referring everyone back to the Citizenship Resource Center. We have a number of downloadable materials on there that you download, obviously, for free that you should look at. I mean,

it's numerous materials that cover the hundred questions. We have audio and video materials that you can view for free.

Some of them are available in other languages.

Well, so it appears that we've gone through all the questions that we had coming in from all of you today, so we want to thank you again for taking the time to join the webinar, and we also wanted to remind you that we will be having more webinars in the future. The next one will be coming up in March, and to get more information about our webinars, again, we wanted to repeat the information on how to sign up through the USCIS webpage. If you go to uscis.gov and click on "email me alerts," and then select when you put in your email, it will give you a list of categories, so you would go to the outreach category, and then select IMLS updates, and once you've clicked on that, you will be on our listserv, and so whenever we send out any updates about our future webinars, activities that relate to libraries, you will most certainly receive those.

And so again, we want to thank you for your participation, and we hope that you'll join us again on March 6 for our next webinar. Have a great day, everyone.

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